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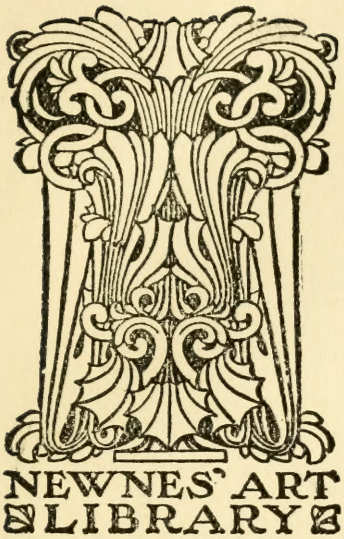

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

Photo: Hollyer

MARIANA

from the painting by D. G. Rossetti

Art
Biog.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

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DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

BY ERNEST RADFORD

NO artist entirely of the last century has had so much written about him as Rossetti, so the trouble is with the superabundance rather than the paucity of the material, and attempting within the limits of space, to give not only the main facts of his life once more, but to pay the tribute of an Art-lover to Genius, is in reality very much harder than it would be to write at great length.

Between certain young writers in the year of Rossetti's death, there was a most spirited race from Birchington where the dead lay to the nearest publishing houses, and their books stood alone for some time. Then came one in the "Great Writers" series, the author of which, Mr. Joseph Knight, took Rossetti's poetical works as his main subject. To books must be added the articles which have flowed like a stream through the press, but of the man as we know him now, there was little in the biographies published before the appearance in 1892 of Wm. Bell Scott's "Autobiography," which made a great stir in its day; so great that the consequence was the immediate call for more to which Wm. Rossetti responded in 1895 with the "Memoirs and Family Letters" of his late brother. "He would be wrongly described," said the writer, "as a sentimentalist, a dreamer, and æsthete, and the like, without making allowance on the other side for attributes of a very opposite character, for the fact is that he was full of buoyancy, vigour, *élan;* well-alive to the main chance, capable of enjoying the queer as well as the graver aspects of life; and whatever else he may have been, a quick-blooded, straight-speaking man who hated nothing so much as humbug," and was extraordinarily quick to detect it. These desirable masculine traits are not very commonly found with the emotional and intellectual characteristics of poets, but Rossetti was started in life with them all: as prone at the age of

eighteen to make the most impious jokes, as to paint, or compose his poems.

But with humour there was solicitude always, and whether as critic of writings by brother and sister, or their adviser on other occasions, he never spared trouble at all. What the reader will notice in the majority of the home letters is their simplicity, and the sanity of his advice. As for "moods," he had his share of them, but remembering that Rossetti, besides being one of ourselves, was "in the essence of his mind and temperament," both poet and artist in one, the wonder will seem to be not that the balance of parts in a mind so strangely composed was upset, but that it was maintained so long. Nowhere do we seem so near to the Rossetti who lives in Art as in Lady Burne-Jones's lately published Life of her husband wherein the names of Rossetti, Morris, and Jones occur more frequently than any others. "I wish," she says, "it were possible to explain the impression made upon me as a young girl whose experience had so far been quite remote from Art, by sudden and close intercourse with those to whom it was the breath of life. The only approach I can make to it, is by saying that I felt the presence of a new religion." There is more to the same effect than can be quoted, and in the particular case of Rossetti there is evidence from all quarters of the strength of the hold which his genius gave him over others. "In these first years," said Burne-Jones, "I never wanted to think but as he thought, and in the miserable ending years of his life, I never forgot this image of him in his prime, and upbraided the fate that could change him." "Rossetti was the planet round which we revolved," said Mr. Prinsep in his account of the Oxford days. The picture I have in my mind has been formed as the reader will see, by comparing the impressions of those who actually knew the man, or by accident of birth or marriage were drawn into the circle to which he belonged. One such is Helen M. M. Rossetti, who says: "I have purposely laid stress on Rossetti's possession in very full measure of humour because of its infinite value to the possessor in as much as he is an artist at all."

The argument is, that there should be a sufficiency of it where there is genius; but in Rossetti's peculiar case the combination produced a man so far from perfect according to ordinary standards of manners that a very liberal allowance for his eccentricity had to be made wherever he pitched his tent. For confirmation of this, and entertainment, the reader should turn to the pages of Madox Brown's Diary which tells us how the time passed whilst Rossetti was with him at Finchley. Also to some of John Ruskin's letters. But it is possible to have too many laughable anecdotes where the main object is to insist on an artist's genius, and throughout the whole course of the story to keep that clearly in view.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, born May 12, 1828, had for father a poet, scholar, and patriot whose name is honoured in Italy. As his grandmother on his mother's side was English, it follows that Dante was only three parts Italian, but a very strong mixture indeed can be so composed,

and it would be impossible to overrate the importance of the foreign element in his constitution. His father, as professor of Italian in King's College, had for a long while been settled here, and the home of the Rossettis in London has been described as a "little Italian Colony where the native language was spoken."

"It is interesting to note," said Helen Rossetti, "that whereas so many artists and writers have started life heavily handicapped by their families and domestic relations, the early surroundings of Dante were in every way calculated to encourage and foster the development of his intellectual powers." Simple living, and only such luxury as was consistent with the most rigid economy, seems to have been the rule, and not often in history do we find records of a family at once so gifted and so entirely united. Though not so remarkable, many will think, as the astonishing command of language which was acquired so early; he had together with that, a noteworthy taste for drawing, and it was "always understood in his family that he would be an artist when he grew up."

"Towards the end of 1841 at the age of thirteen years and some months, he left King's College School for Sass's Academy, a class for drawing conducted by Mr. F. S. Cary, a son as it happened of the translator of Dante." After spending some four years with Cary he obtained admission, July 1846, to the Antique School of the Royal Academy, remaining about two years, at the end of which time Rossetti according to Mr. Stephens, who writes with a teacher's knowledge, was "notably weak in anatomy, and without any scientific knowledge of perspective." This may seem "sad and bad" to the lover of orderly progress in study, but Rossetti, already a poet, could hardly have given his whole mind to the routine work of the school, and it seems pretty certain that neither the *Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, nor *Ecce Ancilla Domini*, would have been painted at that particular time if he had been kept toiling at what passes for Art with the many who had none of his genius for it. He seems to have left the Academy thinking it time he had other teachers, and to that end approached Madox Brown whose work he admired immensely, but when it appeared that his task-work under that master was only to be what he was tired of, he became irregular in his attendance, and presently gave it up. There never were men more unlike than these two, for we see in the elder the master of an unmistakably English, as well as a strangely unpoetical Art, and in Rossetti the utter reverse of all that: an artist whose gift to his lovers was the flower of a southern clime. It ought never to be forgotten though that Brown was a splendid friend, and the most steadfast he ever had. Nor does it follow that his influence was not very great, for the impressions of youth are the strongest, and what Rossetti had looked for in vain he saw in his new friend's work.

After only a few months with Madox Brown, he began to share a studio with Holman Hunt. So ended the painter's pupilage, and we have the record of more than thirty years work in the accompanying illustrations. In the pen drawings of Goethe's *Gretchen*, and Coleridge's *Genevieve*,

both of the year 1848, there is evidence of Flaxman's influence; also, most probably Retzsch's whose illustrations of *Faust* were famous. Towards the end of 1849, accompanied by Holman Hunt, he visited Paris and Belgium, and in the *Laboratory*, a water-colour painted soon after his return, Mr. Marillier notices not only the influence of Madox Brown in the drawing, but in the brilliant and striking colour, that of the Italian and Flemish painters whose works he had studied lately.

It would be as well to pause at this point to consider what manner of youth it was who at the age of twenty years only, was to achieve immortality with *Ecce Ancilla Domini*.

His activity in literature had up to that time been something astonishing, says his biographer, for, apart from his other poems, his book of translations from the Italian poets, though not published until 1861, was actually written between 1845 and 1859. Though we have had from the author of *Euphorion* her remarkable study of *Mediæval Love*, and are being told what to deduct on the score of conceit from the sonnets in imitation of the Italian which were as the sands of the sea without number in the "spacious days" which gave birth to them, the knowledge of Italy's genius, which would help to the understanding of the poet we had in Rossetti, is not by any means common, and failing that it may seem a pity that so much should be written about him. Suffice it for the moment to say that only by devoting his youth to the poets of his own country did he discover in English the music we have in his verse, and all of a sudden appeared as the master of what must have seemed a new instrument; striking no uncertain note on it either, nor mistaking his power of bringing his Heaven so near as it seems to the reader of the imperishable Sonnet in which we are told what he saw in the Virgin Mary. The world must then have seemed young to Rossetti, with only one mystery in it.

Though actually it is impossible to think of this painter apart from the poet, the business of the present moment is with his pictures chiefly, and what remains of my space has to be devoted to the illustrations. After the point we have reached, the appearance of Ruskin as the champion of the Pre-Raphaelites is the most important event to be noticed. Rossetti's undoubtedly was the inspiring force of this movement, but actually there is not a painting of his so characteristic of it* as some of Millais's were; and Madox Brown's, and Holman Hunt's. In the *Girlhood of Mary Virgin* there is all the sincerity that could be desired, and all the devotion to Nature, but these are virtues to be sought after, rather than idiosyncrasies to be avoided, and the painter of *Ecce Ancilla Domini* had really as much in common with our impressionists as with the men of the set he was in. No painting of the same subject has ever made a profounder impression, and no writer, excepting the painter himself, has ever done justice to it. So it remains the "world's choice" among paintings treating of that subject; yet Rossetti's by all accounts was rather the poet's religion than that of any particular church, and though

* Captain Ruxton of New York to W. M. Rossetti.

his fame as a painter brought him orders for ecclesiastical work, the amount he actually did was not great.

The *Girlhood of Mary Virgin* brought £80 to the painter at once, whereas the *Annunciation*, that "Blessed white daub," as he called it, remained unsold for the next three years, during which he had hoped to be earning. So painting in oil was given up for some time, and subjects for somewhat more popular pictures had to be sought far and wide. Rossetti's had to be poetical subjects though, since he cared for so little else, and Dante, Boccaccio, Malory, Tennyson, Browning and others have had something to thank him for. Nor was Shakespeare entirely neglected, and that his mind at that time was simply packed full of ideas for pictures there remains very ample proof.

"The statement could be easily verified," says Mr. Marillier, "that many, if not most, of Rossetti's later pictures were planned during these early strenuous years of his life. No one will ever know what piles of unused studies and drawings were destroyed in the periodical excavations of his studio, or during his frequent removals; and a visitor of about this time, Sir Edward Burne-Jones, has recorded his amazement at the number which littered the floor, and every available corner."

Thus with ideas enough to last him his life-time, we see him started as a professional painter, and it will be convenient to divide the years of his active life into decades. Whilst the quality of the original must necessarily be lost in the reproduction, the design is at any rate there by means of which we are brought almost as close to the artist on his intellectual side as we should have been by the original, and with illustrations so arranged as to take us through the stages of his career are not altogether without guides.

It would be difficult to over-estimate during the first of these periods, the importance of Ruskin's enthusiastic admiration of the young painter, for without his solicitous friendship, and very substantial help during the years of the engagement to Miss Siddall, there might have been hard times for them both. Next after this in importance, came the meeting at Oxford over that celebrated work at the Union with Morris and his confederates. Though it was little he really did, his eloquence fired the others, and the fact seems to be that what they most wanted in Art, they actually had in this man with whom it was a living thing. What wonder that he had Morris's worship, or that of Morris's friend, Burne-Jones? Fortunately the biography of the latter is at hand to refer to now, and no one who reads it can doubt the strength of the master's influence, or fail to be deeply moved.

Since so much of his genius found its fullest expression in colour, there must necessarily be disappointments where it is lacking, and unqualified admiration of all here shown is not required of the reader. The object has been to make the illustrations instructive, and of that they can hardly fail. Allowance must also be made for the fact that no idea of the scale of a work can be conveyed by the reproduction, nor can any one tell

from illustrations by means of "process" in what medium the painter worked. I think it as well to say this at once, because Rossetti during this period was working chiefly in water-colour on drawings of no great scale.

Though associated with the pre-Raphaelites, he produced nothing so excessively laboured as the most characteristic work of the Brethren. In the exceptional case of the picture called *Found* where everything had to be "life-like," the task proved altogether too hard, and though commenced in 1853, it was still in hand when he died. What we have to look for then in the work of these few years is not the pre-Raphaelitism which he had preached, but rather the indications of genius which, though often obscured by the subject-matter, are never entirely lost.

Borgia, 1851. Water-colour. (The reproduction is from a replica.) For a painter so young perhaps too much is attempted. Two sweetly pretty figures in a not very attractive group are those of the little dancers; note the face and pose of the boy, recalling the Primitives in their *naïveté*, though otherwise modern entirely. The light that comes from his favourite window is enough to give an idea of what the Borgia's attractions were, and his fondness of gorgeous attire in women may account for his choice of this subject.

Carlisle Wall, 1853. Water-colour. In this the "elimination of the immaterial" was carried as far as any two lovers could wish, and the painter was fortunate in having a subject belonging to no particular time or place.

King Arthur's Tomb, 1854. Water-colour. The mannerism which is remarkable in this little drawing may be attributed partly to the Pan-Anglican Mediævalism of a particular period, and like most of the work that bears witness to the seriousness of that obsession, appears to be anything but true to the life—either that which was lived of old, or ours of the present day. Rossetti was led out of his course sometimes, but took one of the "seven lamps" with him, and carried it into dark places. Since it illustrates Malory also, the drawing of Tristam and Iseult, though of much later date (1867) may as well be compared with the other. The painting here reproduced is a copy in water-colour of a cartoon for stained glass which was done for Morris's Firm, 1862.

Beatrice Denying her Salutation, 1851. *Paolo and Francesca*, 1855. *Beata Beatrix*, 1883.

Excepting the artist's daring there is nothing very remarkable in the first of these three paintings, for again he attempts too much. In *Paolo and Francesca* he had a far more congenial subject than he had found in Dante before, and it shows in other respects an advance on the work of the previous years. He had learned amongst other things to concentrate the spectator's attention on the main object, and this in his latter work is what he most constantly aimed at. So the objective in this painting is "Love," and in *Beata Beatrix*, as he portrayed her, "Grief." It was towards the realisation by means of his Art of these and other ideals

that he was tending throughout his life, and this is the clue we should follow.

The years we are in were ones of amazing fertility. Drawings of very great beauty were Dante's *Vision of Ruth and Leah*, 1855, and his design for the Frontispiece of Wm. Allingham's "Day and Night Songs," wherein Rossetti made his first appearance as a book illustrator. The original drawing of the great picture *Dante's Dream*, was made in the following year, 1856. In 1857 came what another writer describes as a "charming little series of water-colours," purchased by Morris, of which the *Blue Closet*, being the loveliest, has attracted the most attention.

Other important undertakings of the same period (1856–1860) were the illustrations to Moxon's Tennyson, and the Reredos for Llandaff Cathedral, wherein *The Seed of David* is represented. There is proof in the "Tennyson" that his genius was as much at home on the page of a poet's book as elsewhere in the field of Art, while in the *Nativity* we see for the first time the face of the lady who inspired so much of his later work. So Mr. Marillier says very truly that Rossetti's connection with Oxford where they had met "did not end with the Union paintings." As to the suggestion that he painted but one type of face thereafter, it must be taken for what it is worth. Mr. William Rossetti has given us a nearly complete list of his brother's models, and we shall make their acquaintance here.

The Meeting of Dante with Beatrice in Florence and Palestine, 1859. Two panels in oils painted in Red Lion Square for Morris's house at Upton. Something that seems to have escaped notice is the likeness of *Beatrice in Florence* to *Mary at the House of Simon*, which belongs to the previous year. (Both from the same model clearly, and of both faces the three-quarter view.) Though completed during this year, it is known that he had had the latter in hand since 1853, and after allowing for the painter's own strength, there remains a good deal of a remarkable work to be attributed to the influence of Madox Brown, and to what he had noticed most in the practice of that painter's masters.

A letter he wrote to Wm. Bell Scott towards the close of that period may or may not refer to *Bocca Baciata*, a painting in oils of that time, but since a very marked change will be noticed in his painting from that time forward, is of quite sufficient importance to be quoted at length :

"*November* 13, 1859.

"I have painted a figure in oils, in doing which I have made an effort to avoid what I know to be a besetting sin of mine, and indeed rather common to painting—that of stippling on the flesh. I have succeeded in quite keeping the niggling process at a distance this time, and am very desirous when I can find leisure and opportunity, of painting various figures of this kind chiefly as studies of rapid flesh painting. I am sure

that among the many botherations of a picture where design, drawing, expression, and colour have to be thought of all at once . . . one can never do justice to what faculty of mere painting may be in one. Even among the old good painters, their portraits and simpler pictures are nearly always their masterpieces for colour and execution, and I fancy if one kept this in view one would have *a better chance of learning to paint at last*."

I have purposely underscored the words which bear witness to Rossetti's knowledge of his own failings, for it ought to be generally known that he was at all times aware of them. As a youth he had that prodigy Millais at his right hand to make him despair of being his equal; but Millais at the same time had the painter of *Ecce Ancilla Domini* with him.

In the above-quoted letter to Scott we see very clearly on what the mind of the painter was bent, but it does not appear that he had any idea at that time of practising one kind of painting only. It will also be noticed that he proposed to make "studies chiefly," but neither the leisure nor the opportunity came with the desire to have them; consequently, not all at once do we notice this change, and though paintings of the kind he had promised became more frequent, he was still producing beautiful work along the same lines as before, and some of the best must be noticed.

To commence with the year 1861, Rossetti is credited by Morris's biographer with the idea of starting the business now so very well known under the name of Morris and Co. If it be true that he originated this as well as the earlier movement of the pre-Raphaelites, the amount of work the world owes to Rossetti's inspiring force must be very much greater than that which he completed himself, and in the reckoning which is to come it will have to be duly considered. For the evidence of his association with that adventure the catalogues showing what he accomplished during 1861 and the following year should be consulted.

King René's Honeymoon. The panel devoted to Music in the Gothic Cabinet executed by Morris and Co. for Mr. Seddon. In this admired little painting there is amusement for the spectator in the attitude of the lady performer whilst being kissed by her lord and master.

A notable event was the appearance (1861) of Rossetti's "Early Italian Poets," and a beautiful title-page designed for that volume remains. The artist always had stores of previous studies at hand, and the idea in this case was taken from the panel called *Love's Greeting*, which had been painted in Red Lion Square.

As if in fulfilment of his promise to make studies in oils from single figures his business so far as he could, came *Burd Alane*,* *Fair Rosamund*, *Regina Cordium*, and others, in none of which are we as yet amongst the ideals of a later day.

* The Ballad of Burd Helen, or Childe Waters.

The following year (1862), is represented by a reproduction of Rossetti's *Joan of Arc*, a painting deservedly popular, and for reasons not far to seek. The act of kissing the Sword of Deliverance is being performed by a woman who with our modern apprehension of Death, has yet the determination to face it which has won battles time out of mind. All he had ever preached of sincerity was put into practice here, and its having been painted in the year of his wife's death may account for the depth of the feeling in it.

We shall presently come upon paintings appealing more directly to the lovers of "Art for Art's sake" than to the generality, but before reaching that point the *Beata Beatrix*, the *Lady Lilith*, the *Beloved*, and other works of the second period will have to be noticed (1861–1866). Of the first it would be hard to say much, and Rossetti's own words are the best: "while the bird, a messenger of Death, drops the poppy between her hands, she through her shut lids is conscious of a new world; gazing continually on His countenance *qui est per omnium sæcula benedictus*."

"What Rossetti thought and felt about this picture himself we may gather from the fact that for some years he refused to send out any replica of it even when replicas had become a regular and lucrative branch of business to the detriment of his better Art."

There is nothing so good in times of distress as hard work, and Rossetti was not at all idle that year. To see what else he accomplished we have to descend from the spiritual plane to the one below that upon which more ordinary subjects abound, but chiefly we have to remember that we had in that year his *Beatrix:* a painting like nothing which had preceded it, nor like anything yet to come. In ordinary life a man, even such as Rossetti was, may repeat himself many times, but not when he has already surpassed himself, as we say. So though there were other *Annunciations*, the like of *Ecce Ancilla Domini* was not to be seen again, and so once and for all in *Beata Beatrix* he painted the visitation of Death to his bride.

Lady Lilith, 1863. The subject has been objected to on the ground that the like of her is not in nature, but is not the type preserved in what is commonly called "the dangerous woman," and preserved for all time in this subtly wonderful painting? Rossetti was wont to describe it as a "Toilet Piece," and his having called her *Lady Lilith* rather than *Lilith* only makes it even pretty clear that he had in his mind's eye some modern descendant of hers. Let that be compared with the *Venus Verticordia* of the same year. If ever any one was, she is pure, designed simply to look Life in the face and be glad; counting Love as but one of God's gifts when it comes. As usual with Rossetti's works there are different versions of it to choose from, but none so much to my liking as the one I have in my mind.

The paintings which followed from 1863 onwards, were mostly of beauty in the reality as it was shown him by sitters and models. *Belcolore*, *Brimfull*, *A Lady in Yellow*, &c. "Rossetti about this time ceased

painting the head only and began to devote himself to larger single figure subjects," one of the earliest of which was his *Lilith*, which, with *Venus Verticordia*, were the principal paintings in oils of that year. By means of such pictures as these, and one as lovely as any, *Il Ramoscello*, the way was prepared for *The Beloved*, which is usually considered the finest production of Rossetti's life and art. Nor should it be otherwise considering he was then in the prime of life. "Surrounded by her maidens she advances to meet the bridegroom, and at his approach she unveils her face, which for radiant beauty and purity is almost without parallel in the annals of pictorial art. Rich and splendid in colour beyond all description is the bride's gorgeous robe which is a wonderful Rossettian green, embroidered with red and gold." *The Virgins that be her fellows shall bear her company*, as the Song says.

In *Joli Cœur*, one of the "Beloved's" attendants can hardly fail to be recognised, and another, I think, in the *Loving Cup*. The painter in these works of his prime was absolute master of his resources such as they were. His feeling for pure brush drawing found expression amongst these fair women in their contours, and particularly where it is loveliest, in the line of the lids, and the lips and the hands.

Rosa Triplex, 1869. There are several versions of *Rosa Triplex* extant in his crayon drawings, but none of more beauty than this, and Rossetti has given a finish to it to which I wish to draw attention particularly. In the first place the linking of the three figures has been effected with marvellous art; and secondly, do we not see in the loveliness of their attire, and its ornamentation by strings of pearls, the work of an artist who could not have been kept from adding beauty to beauty while Nature was calling to him? Not by preaching as others had, but by painting as no one had, he anticipated nearly every manifestation of that most welcome reunion of Art and Craft which has been the happy result of so much united action in that direction.

The most photographic picture we have of his home during this second period, his manner of living, his collections, and his menagerie, and of the entertainment he gave his friends is in a booklet of "Reminiscences" by Mr. Treffry Dunn who succeeded a previous assistant, Mr. Knewstub: "It will be apparent to the readers of this narrative." says Mr. Wm. Rossetti, "that in the years which it covers, Mr. Dunn saw as much of Dante Rossetti as any other person did—he witnessed his comings-in, and goings-out; was highly familiar with his methods of work as a painter, and did a good deal towards keeping things straight in an establishment where the master's rather thriftless and negligent habits in household affairs might easily have made them crooked." Mr. Dunn's account is in the main of the years which saw Rossetti in the zenith of his career.

In 1867 came the first intimation he had that his constitution would not stand the strain that was put upon it by his persistent neglect of the means by which the most of us contrive to keep what passes for health in London.

"The poet could not sleep aright,
For his soul kept up too much light
Under his eyelids for the night."

The lines are by Mrs. Browning, and seem as if they had been written to meet every such case as Rossetti's. Probably insomnia was the first cause of his trouble, though at the same time there was the utmost anxiety about his eyesight; then came the first really serious illness, and though there were paintings of no less importance to come than that of *Dante's Dream*, the whole series of his idealisations of Mrs. Morris, and most beautiful of all, *Veronica Veronese*, in too much of his later work there is evidence not to be wondered at of exhaustion of motive and strength which some will detect in the painting, others in the comparative weakness of the conception, and others perhaps in both.

Mr. Colvin, writing in 1883, had the advantage of having very recently seen these pictures, and his opinion of Rossetti's painting from 1870 onwards was that it could not be compared with advantage with the work of the previous years; nor did he make the exceptions in favour of certain pictures which others are still inclined to, but his contention was sound in the main. Omitting for want of space his review of the latest years, I think I cannot do better than quote what he said in praise:

"Beginning, after a few earlier essays like the *Bocca Baciata* with the *Beata Beatrix*, and the *Aurelia* (both of the year 1863) the productions of this class and period include certainly all that is most technically accomplished, if not what is most strikingly interesting and suggestive in Rossetti's work as a painter. He, by degrees, acquired breadth and ease and a real mastery in the design of these single female figures and heads. Certain qualities of oil painting he mastered with entire success. Depth of tone and chiaroscuro he as yet did not seek, but he attacked and vanquished the most daring problems of colour in equal and diffused light. For the combination of keen and flashing intensity with mystery and delightfulness of quality, his paintings of tissues and jewels and flowers at this period stands, it is no extravagance to say, alone in Art. Witness the cornflowers and passion-flowers, the hawthorn tiles and green robes, and amethyst and ruby and turquoise enamelled jewellery of the *Blue Bower* —or the roses and honey-suckle and butterflies of the *Venus Verticordia*." (*Magazine of Art*, 1883.)

The first meeting with Mrs. Morris, then Miss Burden, was in 1857, and one of the earliest drawings of her is the *Study for Queen Guenevere* of the same date as the design for the Oxford Union called *Launcelot Escaping from Guenevere's Chamber*. In the *Nativity* painted for Llandaff, is not only the most beautiful portrait of her, but as beautiful a representation of the Virgin Mother as any we have in Art. From intimacy and subsequent residence with Morris resulted many more drawings and paintings. The one here reproduced of the year 1858 was, as Mr. Marillier

says, "the precursor of the long series of canvases by which he has become best known to the public," and is at present in the Tate Gallery with *Ecce Ancilla Domini*, and the *Beata Beatrix*. In the *Mariana*, 1870, she reappears, but what should be particularly noticed in the reproduction is the sweet face of the boy page with his song :

"Take, oh! take those lips away. . . ."

The possessors of Mr. Marillier's book will do well to compare the illustration he gives of *Dante's Dream* from the water-colour of 1856 with that of the great oil painting now in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, 1870–1871. The opportunity of instituting the comparison should be seized upon, since it is offered, but the later painting remains beyond doubt the greater, not only in scale, and whatever its failings may be, is silencing in its effect on the witnesses of the last act in this tragedy.

Veronica Veronese, 1872. *The Blessed Damosel*, 1877. It can hardly be necessary to call attention to the splendidly decorative qualities of most of the paintings of these last years, but while others have little else in them, we have all that in this painting, and a great deal more besides. That he gave us nothing more purely beautiful than the *Veronica* is an opinion which gains in strength, for there is poetry in the idea of flooding the canvas with song : a lady while listening to the sweet notes of a bird tries to strike them on the violin. Since we see in this picture the model for the *Blessed Damosel*, it may seem a pity that all the spiritual loveliness of the *Veronica* was not bestowed on the damsel as well. The painting was nobly planned however, and it would be hard to find fault with Rossetti's representation of the Damosel as a humanly beautiful creature with the yearning for earth in her heart that is so finely expressed in the poem. When the last word has been said about the painting and all it means, will not somebody venture to say how well it would look in stone ?

La Bella Mano, 1875. To come at this date upon such pure studies and paintings from Nature as we have in the sweet face of the child who is holding the bracelet up, and in the beautiful face of the *Magdalene* (1876) is very refreshing indeed. Either because others seem to deserve it better than others, or because the allowance of space has been exceeded already, some of these illustrations must pass without notice at present. Dr. Richard Garnett has said of Rossetti truly : "that many departments of human activity had no interest for him," and that being so, a corresponding limitation of intellectual range in his art is to be expected of course. A poet among painters, mostly of the commonplace, he should never have lowered himself to their level only to imitate what they did better, but fortunately he did that seldom, and because the 'Subject' was everything then. In none of his character paintings is there a gleam of the genuine humour which he actually had in great measure ; not that which has given the painter of *Uncle Toby and Widow Wadman* his place among

the immortals, nor for paintings like *Washing Hands* could he be given a place on the ground which painters like Orchardson hold. Rossetti's admiration of Hogarth and Morland shows how thorough was his appreciation of the technique of those masters, and that he well understood the Englishman's feeling for them. He it was who said to Watts-Dunton that " Millais's executive power was paralysing to look upon," but whose " hand and soul " moved in a sphere which none of those masters entered, and only because it has been overpraised do I care to notice the work which he did on the lower plane.

Though he could not have known that nothing was wanted so much, nor that it would shortly become his main business, he had decided, as we have seen, to fill his gallery with paintings of women chiefly, and putting the question of health aside, it seems to be pretty certain that his talent would have run to seed among the ideals of his latter days. It does happen to be the fact that his life was shortened by his constant recourse to chloral, but he was already committed in Art to the pursuit of a narrow course, and it does not seem that his mind was very gravely affected by it, for he could write in this wise to his old friend Madox Brown about the habit he had acquired : " the fact is that a man in my case must either do as I do or cease from necessary occupation which cannot be pursued in the day when the night is robbed of its rest." Anxiety about his eyesight had reminded him that after all he was a poet, and may be held to account for his having consented, though with the utmost reluctance, to the exhumation (in 1869) of the manuscript which he had laid by his wife when she died.

When he returned to the composition of verse it was with unabated powers, and there is truth in what the friend of his last years has said : " In style the most direct and masculine of his poetic work is his very latest, as will be found by referring to the volume of ' Ballads and Sonnets, 1881 ; ' " and no less convincing than that is the evidence of his latest letters to the members of his own family to whom he seemed ever the same.

Whatever the cause of it was, the leave-taking at Kelmscott must have greatly increased his loneliness, and no less unfortunate probably was the breaking up of the Firm to which he had belonged from the first, for nothing could have been better for him at that time than to seek rest in design.

It would be hard to imagine a life more happily started, or to find any one moving in such a circle as his, yet Rossetti, alternately worshipped and worshipping, was the sort of man who must have congenial spirits about him or none, feeling it better to be alone than to converse with the common sort ; and during his busiest years, those which followed the death of his wife, must have found company almost as much to his liking in the various things he collected as in most of the people about him.

In the letter which has been quoted he said, "he would have a better chance of learning to paint at last if he kept but one object in view." Thus did this more exclusive devotion to Art help to intensify that personal loneliness the feeling of which was deepened (can any one doubt it) immensely by the irreparable loss of the one in whom he saw Beatrice :—on Earth as Dante had seen her, and in Heaven again and again.

TABLE OF DATES

The British School of that time "had sunk very far below what it had been . . . and its ordinary average had come to be something for which commonplace is a laudatory term, and imbecility a not excessive one."—*W. M. Rossetti.*

1828.—D. G. Rossetti born. No. 30 Charlotte Street, Portland Place.

1836.—The Rossettis moved to No. 50, and in 1851 to Arlington Street, Mornington Crescent. Excepting for work D. G. R. lived at home until November 1852, when he took rooms at No. 14 Chatham Place by Blackfriars Bridge.

1837–1841.—King's College; taught drawing by John Sell Cotman.

1841–1846.—At Sass's Drawing Academy under F. S. Cary, son of Dante's translator, Francis Cary.

1846–1848.—At the Royal Academy School with Holman Hunt, Millais, and Woolner. Left school to have Madox Brown's teaching. Left him to share Holman Hunt's studio.

1847–1848.—Became acquainted with Wm. Allingham and W. B. Scott.

1848.—Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood formed.

1849.—To Paris and Belgium with Holman Hunt. Painted Miss Siddall as *Beatrice*. *Girlhood of Mary Virgin* exhibited.

1850.—The "Germ." Projected by Dante, and edited by W. M. Rossetti.

1851.—Ruskin's championship of the pre-Raphaelites. His letters to the *Times*, May 13 and 30.

1854.—Friendship with Ruskin cemented. Undertakes teaching at the Working Men's College.

1855.—Drawing for Wm. Allingham's "Music Master."

1856.—Reredos for Llandaff Cathedral commissioned.

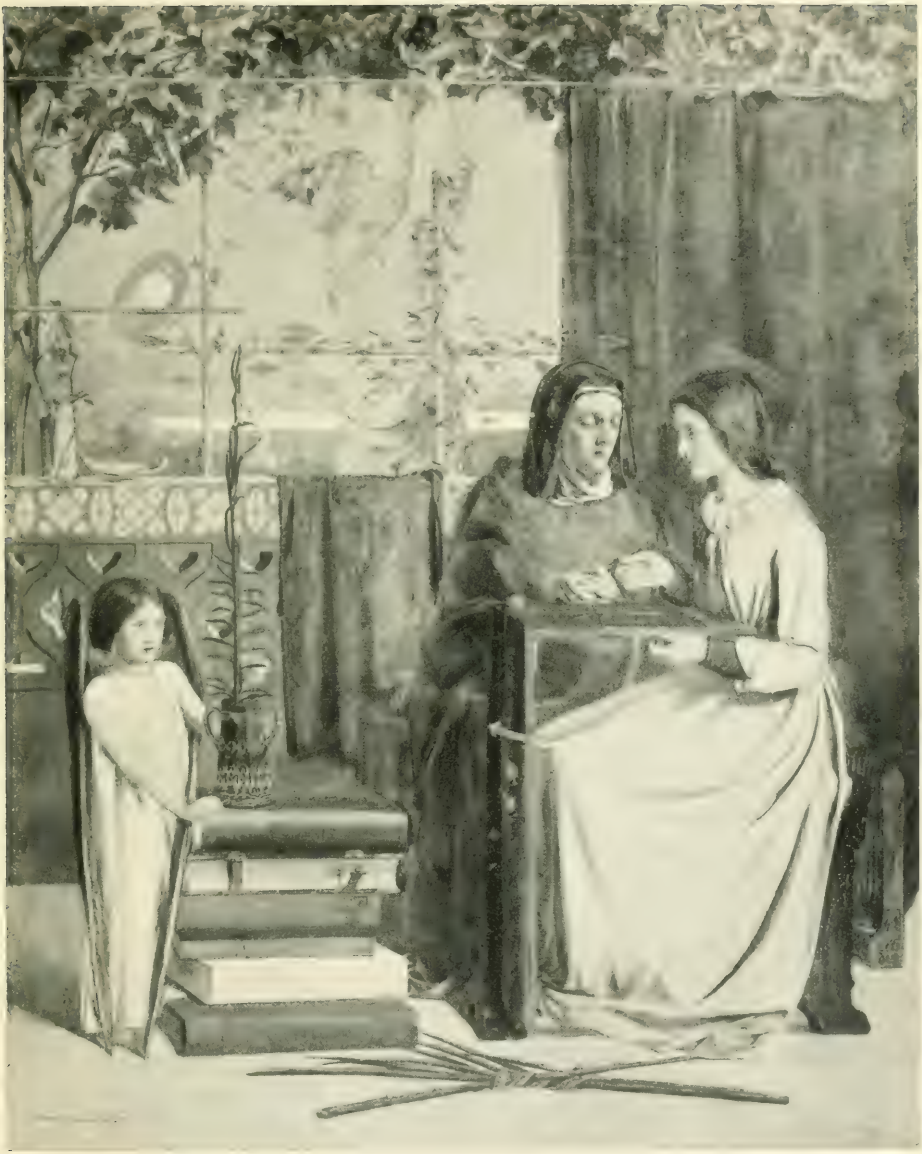
1856–1859.—No. 17 Red Lion Square where Rossetti had formerly worked with Walter Deverall occupied by Wm. Morris and Burne-Jones.

1857.—Moxon's "Tennyson." Five illustrations.

1857–1859.—Frescoes for Oxford Union.

1858.—Exhibition of English Art at Philadelphia.
1860.—The building of Morris's house at Upcot : vacated in 1865.
1860.—Marriage, May 23.
1861.—The Firm : Morris, Faulkner, Marshall and Co. Publication of " Early Italian Poets."
1862.—February 11, Death of Mrs. Rossetti. Left Chatham Place for rooms in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and in the autumn of the same year removed to No. 16 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea. (Swinburne, Meredith, and Wm. Rossetti to share the house with him.) Designs for "Goblin Market," by Christina Rossetti.
1863.—Gilchrist's " Life of Wm. Blake." Rossetti's part in it.
1867–1868.—Anxiety about eyesight. Insomnia.
1868–1869.—Visits to Miss Alice Boyd, Penkill Castle, Ayrshire.
1870.—The " Poems."
1869–1874.—Joint tenant with Wm. Morris of Kelmscott House, Oxfordshire. From the summer of 1872 was in residence most of the time.
1872.—Very serious illness ; precipitated and aggravated by the reappearance of Buchanan's attack on " The Fleshly School of Poetry."
1874.—The Firm. Dissolution of partnership.
1875–1876.—Rented a house at Bognor.
1877.—Recurrence of illness.
1881.—" Poems," second edition ; " Ballads and Sonnets."
1882.—Death at Birchington-on-Sea, April 14.
1883.—Exhibitions of Rossetti's works at Burlington House, and at the " Burlington Fine Arts Club."

ILLUSTRATIONS



GIRLHOOD OF MARY VIRGIN

ECCE ANCILLA DOMINI

DANTE DRAWING THE ANGEL

CARLISLE TOWER

Photo, Mansell

THE WRITING ON THE SAND

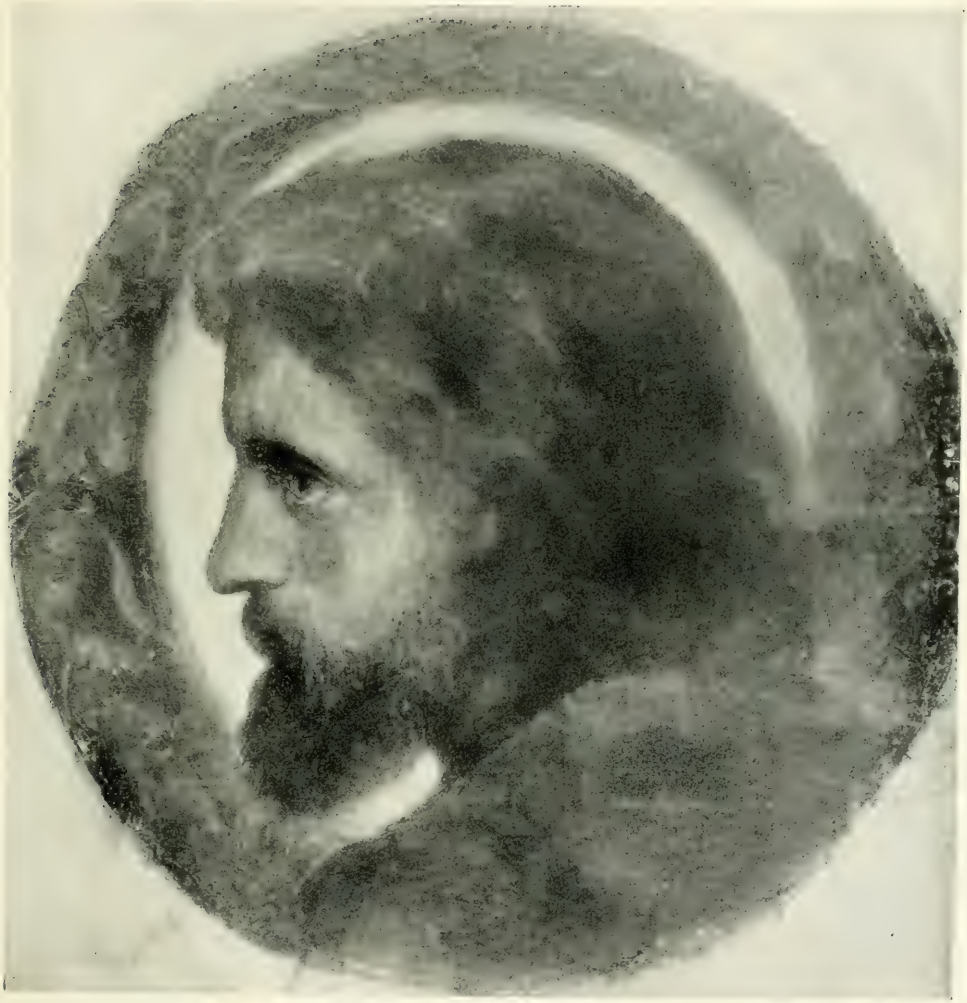
Photo. H. Dixon

FOUND

KING ARTHUR'S TOMB

THE GATE OF MEMORY

THE BOWER GARDEN



HEAD OF CHRIST

[Photo., Hollyer

THE SALUTATION OF BEATRICE IN FLORENCE

Photo, Hollyer

THE SALUTATION OF BEATRICE IN PARADISE

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DAVID THE SHEPHERD
TRIPTYCH, LLANDAFF
CATHEDRAL

THE NATIVITY: CENTRE-PIECE
TRIPTYCH, LLANDAFF CATHEDRAL

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[Photo, Hollyer

DAVID THE KING
TRIPTYCH, LLANDAFF
CATHEDRAL

LOVERS GREETING

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FRANCESCA DA RIMINI

[*Photo, Hollyer*

Photo, Heiner

BURD ALANE

Photo, Hewes

MUSIC—KING RENE'S HONEYMOON

ST. GEORGE—THE PRINCESS DRAWING THE FATAL LOT

PAOLO AND FRANCESCA

FAIR ROSAMOND

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JOAN OF ARC

Photo, Hollyer

BEATA BEATRIX

Photo, Hanfstaengl

BORGIA FAMILY

LADY LILITH

Photo, Mansell

WASHING HANDS

THE BELOVED

JOLI CŒUR

Photo: Caswall Smith

MONNA ROSA

Photo, Anvian

THE LOVING CUP

Photo. Hanfstaengl

SIR TRISTRAM AND LA BELLE YSEULT

Photo, Hollyer

MRS. WILLIAM MORRIS

DANTE'S DREAM

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DANTE'S DREAM (DETAIL)

Photo, Hollyer

DANTE'S DREAM (DETAIL)

Photo, Hollyer

DANTE'S DREAM (DETAIL)

Photo. Hélio

DANTE'S DREAM (DETAIL)

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HOW THEY MET THEMSELVES

Photo, Hollyer

LUCRETIA BORGIA

Photo, Caswell Smith

VERONICA VERONESE

Photo, Hollyer

PROSERPINE

Photo, Caswall Smith

A ROMAN WIDOW

ROSA TRIPLEX

Photo, Hollyer.

THE BLESSED DAMOZEL

[Photo, Caswall Smith

THE BLESSED DAMOZEL

Photo. Cavendish Smith

THE BLESSED DAMOZEL (DETAIL)

THE BLESSED DAMOZEL (DETAIL)

Photo, Cassell & Smith

THE LAMP OF MEMORY

Photo, Hollyer

ASTARTE SYRIACA

THE SEA SPELL

Photo. Hollyer

LA DONNA DELLA FINESTRA

Photo, Mansell

THE SPHINX

Photo, Newnes

THE DAY DREAM

Photo, Caswall Smith

LA PIA

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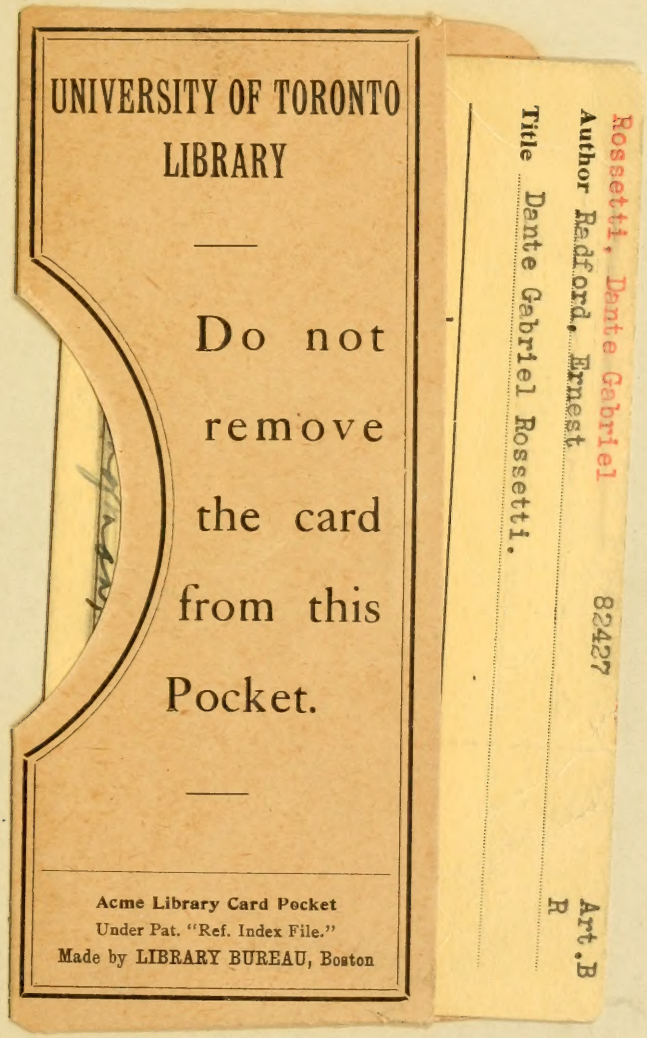
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